

ETHICS OF NURSING

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THE science of duty and the principles of duty as applied to nursing—what do they embrace? Much more than technical knowledge and skill, important as they are, that years of study and training and experience can give. Underlying them must be the motives and thoughts that, converted into action, will make the performance of every act an expression of the spirit of the noble profession that nursing is.

It has been said that in education the aims called for by the world are embraced in the two words, character and health. The precepts and practice of the Great Teacher in His perfect human life establish that truth, but it has been a long while dawning upon the minds and mellowing the hearts of the inhabitants of the world. The fact too is gradually enlightening the understanding and bringing practical results in the readjustment of educational, social, and industrial standards along altruistic lines.

Nursing is a manual occupation and a profession based upon character and health, and a woman engaged in it is afforded peculiar opportunities for exercising and cultivating her natural faculties in the direction that meets these aims. Whether in the ranks, as a private nurse caring for one patient at a time, or in settlement or district work, or in charge of a ward or a training-school or a hospital, she should recognize herself as a product of the evolutionary forces that are at work to perfect the race. That is a wide perspective, but it is the one view that will serve as the true incentive to live up to them. By being herself an embodiment of plain living, high thinking, and healthful, cleanly habits, these traits become the strong warp of the character that she is weaving into the web of life, which depends for its beauty upon those graces of heart and soul that form the woof. What are those graces? They are the fruits of the spirit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, faith, righteousness, and truth.

Consider for a moment the quiet beneficence of the influence of such a character wherever she moves, and especially at the bedside of the sick and suffering. Her presence, her look, her touch, radiate health and comfort and sympathy, and they, together with her knowledge of technique, her systematic methods and skill, her unobtrusive, helpful ways, inspire confidence in the doctor, whose helpmate she is; in the patient, who depends largely upon her for cheer and courage; and in those who are nearest to the patient through ties of kinship and love.

That broad outlook is necessary for her own intellectual health and happiness, and will preserve her from the mistake of narrowing her field of observation and interest, and from allowing her trying routine of details to sink into drudgery. It will dignify her conception of work, and she will come to think that what she can do is her chiefest ornament, the main thing being to do her work well. She will realize that her vocation is truly that of service, and that, however humble her offices for those entrusted to her care may be, they are worthy of her intelligent thought and conscientious performance. Nothing in her line of duty will seem to her common or unclean. She will not shirk disagreeable things that fall to her lot, but will look upon them rather as means of self-discipline, and upon such discipline as a forming principle in the development of character, as a means to the end of subjecting indolence and self-indulgence to the higher powers of her moral nature. She will strive for a broad culture—a culture that is no mere dead possession, but a power of determination; a power that is life—inward, personal life, full of independence and not subject to the will of others; a culture that is a determining factor in deciding what is right for herself, and how best she can perform the work that has been assigned for her to do. To the nurse who lives in a club this phase of experience must often present itself, for unconsciously she is influenced by others, and not always rightly. Of individual responsibility no one can relieve her, and she should not want to be relieved, for the measure of her responsibility is the test of her capacity and strength to bear burdens and to help carry on the world's great work, and having direct access to the great source of strength and wisdom, there is no limit to her acquisition of capacity.

With the presentation of these few thoughts relating to the principles of the ethics of nursing, is it not appropriate to indulge in a little introspection and inquiry?

Does the nurse live up to her ideals? Does she even try very hard to do so? Does the desire to do perfect work in every detail take possession of her mind and heart, and the thought of self-sacrifice and service enter her conception of her work?

Does she dwell upon her duty to herself chiefly in regulating her pecuniary reward for a certain amount of work not to exceed in value the money to be received? Does her relationship to her patient mean, first, a stipulation for so many hours off for rest and sleep; a jealousy as to, and a misunderstanding on her part of, her position in the family, manifested by her receiving her friends as callers in the home of her patrons, who are paying for her time and services? Is she forcing the doctors to understand that her training and skill and experience have prepared her for only a few choice and very select cases, neither too

long nor too short, the location not to extend a mile beyond a certain limit, the time of day an important matter, while after midnight no one need apply, however inconvenient it may be for the hopeless patient to regulate the hour of sickness? Does she ignore the ordinary laws of business relations in her intercourse with the community, and think that, because she is a nurse, she is exempt or entitled to special privileges? In what light does she view that most sacred office of ministering to the mother in the trying hours of her labor, when she most needs the skilful services of a trained nurse, that she places obstetrics on the tabooed list?

It cannot be that she entered upon this holy office of caring for the sick with the thought that it was a life of ease? that she is looking for the luxuries of life where she must expect to find much hardship and personal discomfort?

What is the actuating principle that will make a nurse decline to accept a call when a man states frankly that he cannot afford to pay her full rates for her attendance on a sick member of his family, but that he is willing to pay her the whole of his salary? In short, is the spirit of commercialism and self-indulgence taking possession of and extending its influence through her beautiful profession?

Is the nurse keeping herself abreast of the times? Is she making use of her opportunities to develop herself for the wider field of usefulness that is yearly opening up before her? Does she even acquaint herself with her opportunities of self-improvement in her own line by means of new text-books, the nursing journals, the alumnae meetings, post-graduate work, or clinical advantages?

Is she making herself an indispensable member of her own alumnae association by honest, hard work, or is she contenting herself with criticising its weakness?

Let each nurse bring these questions home to herself and answer them in the searchlight of conscience.

The great army of self-sacrificing workers in this profession need no defence or public recognition. Their noble deeds are performed, and their devotion to duty and charitable works are bestowed, without thought of favorable comment. Their reward is sufficient in knowing simply that they are helping those more needy than themselves, and that they are doing it for the love of humanity. If record is made, it is made by Him who said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

Many of you have probably read that beautiful tribute paid by the Rev. Reed Stuart to Queen Victoria. Because we are women with ideals, and nurses with an aim and a purpose in life, let me repeat its closing

lines here: "It is not fashion nor wealth nor social position that imports, only truth and love and faith and duty; only passion for spiritual ideals can make life possess any lasting value. All who thus live, whether in a palace or in a cottage, belong to earth's nobility. Queen, crowned of God—her empire is not bounded by India and the islands of the sea, it includes the sunrise and the sunset and the splendid stars."

HYGIENE OF THE HOUSEHOLD

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(Concluded from page 435)

"As a man's home is, such is his life. Life is given us that we may train all our faculties, and the business of the Twentieth Century is to see that the home shall make man, woman, boy, or girl stronger and better fitted for new duty all the time."

—EDWARD EVERETT HALE.

THE thoughts of spring house-cleaning are borne in to us on the waves of fresh spring air, as we open wide our windows these April mornings.

Nature is cleaning out-of-doors, with buckets full of clear rain-water, numerous wind-brooms, and dainty new draperies and carpets all over her summer home, and the good housewife prepares to fold away all thoughts of winter in camphor bags and cedar chests, and put the house in summer attire before the languid days are upon us.

In order of sequence the kitchen is the last room in the house to be adorned, but we will reverse this order for once and commence at the foundation of our homes, keeping in mind the importance of applying the principles of hygiene to everything which is of service in the care and preparation of the material which we use in building up our physical life.

I venture to state that in the majority of homes, great and small, little attention is paid to the hygienic surroundings of the room where our daily bread is prepared.

We are flooded with health-foods, scientific treatment of diet, selected diet-lists to suit all sorts and conditions of man, but behind all